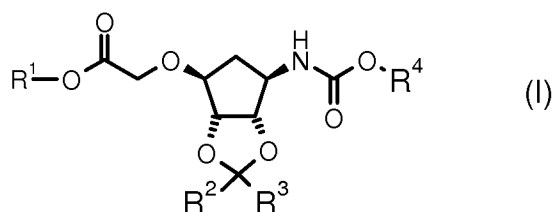


**In the Claims:**

The current status of all claims is listed below and supercedes all previous lists of claims.

Please amend claims 3-17, and add new claims 18-20 as follows.

1. (original) A process for the preparation of a compound of formula (I):



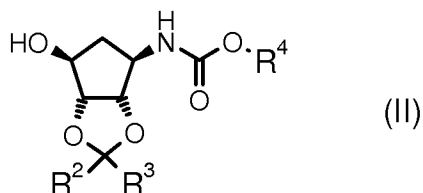
wherein

$R^1$  is  $C_{1-6}$  alkyl;

$R^2$  and  $R^3$  are, independently,  $C_{1-6}$  alkyl; and

$R^4$  is  $C_{1-6}$  alkyl or benzyl (wherein the phenyl ring of benzyl is optionally substituted by nitro,  $S(O)_2(C_{1-4}$  alkyl), cyano,  $C_{1-4}$  alkyl,  $C_{1-4}$  alkoxy,  $C(O)(C_{1-4}$  alkyl),  $N(C_{1-6}$  alkyl) $_2$ ,  $CF_3$  or  $OCF_3$ );

the process comprising reacting a compound of formula (II):



wherein  $R^2$ ,  $R^3$  and  $R^4$  are as defined above, with a suitable base; and

reacting the product so formed with  $R^1OC(O)CH_2X$ , wherein  $R^1$  is as defined above and X is chloro, bromo or iodo;

wherein the process is carried out in a suitable solvent at a temperature in the range  $-40^\circ C$  to  $-5^\circ C$ ; and wherein at least 0.2 moles of the compound of formula (II) are used in the process.

2. (original) A process as claimed in claim 1 wherein  $R^1$ ,  $R^2$  and  $R^3$  are independently selected from  $C_{1-4}$  alkyl.

3. (currently amended) A process as claimed in claim 1 ~~or 2~~ wherein  $R^1$  is ethyl.
4. (currently amended) A process as claimed in claim 1, ~~2 or 3~~ wherein  $R^2$  and  $R^3$  are methyl.
5. (currently amended) A process as claimed in claim 1, ~~2, 3 or 4~~ wherein  $R^4$  is benzyl optionally substituted by  $C_{1-4}$  alkyl.
6. (currently amended) A process as claimed in claim 1, ~~2, 3, 4 or 5~~ wherein  $R^4$  is unsubstituted benzyl.
7. (currently amended) A process as claimed in ~~any one of claims 1 to 6~~ claim 1 wherein X is bromo.
8. (currently amended) A process as claimed in ~~any one of claims 1 to 7~~ claim 1 wherein the base is an alkyl metal  $C_{1-6}$  alkoxide.
9. (currently amended) A process as claimed in ~~any one of claims 1 to 8~~ claim 1 wherein the base is potassium tert-butoxide.
10. (currently amended) A process as claimed in ~~any one of claims 1 to 9~~ claim 1 wherein the molar ratio of suitable base:  $R^1O_2CCH_2X$  : compound of formula (II) is (1 to 1.3):(1 to 1.3):1.
11. (currently amended) A process as claimed in ~~any one of claims 1 to 10~~ claim 1 wherein the molar ratio of suitable base:  $R^1O_2CCH_2X$  : compound of formula (II) is (1.1 to 1.3):(1.1 to 1.3):1.
12. (currently amended) A process as claimed in ~~any one of claims 1 to 11~~ claim 1 wherein the molar ratio of suitable base:  $R^1O_2CCH_2X$  : compound of formula (II) is 1.2:1.2:1.

13. (currently amended) A process as claimed in ~~any one of claims 1 to 12~~ claim 1 wherein the solvent is selected from a cyclic ether, an aliphatic ~~ethers~~ ether and an aromatic solvent.

14. (currently amended) A process as claimed in ~~any one of claims 1 to 13~~ claim 1 wherein the solvent is selected from tetrahydrofuran, diethyl ether, diisopropyl ether, methyl tert-butyl ether, benzene, toluene and xylene; and a mixture of two or more of said solvents.

15. (currently amended) A process as claimed in ~~any one of claims 1 to 14~~ claim 1 wherein the solvent is tetrahydrofuran.

16. (currently amended) A process as claimed in ~~any one of claims 1 to 15~~ claim 1 wherein the temperature is in the range  $-30^{\circ}\text{C}$  to  $-10^{\circ}\text{C}$ .

17. (currently amended) A process as claimed in ~~any one of claims 1 to 16~~ claim 1 wherein the temperature is in the range  $-25^{\circ}\text{C}$  to  $-15^{\circ}\text{C}$ .

18. (new) A process as claimed in claim 1 wherein:

$\text{R}^1$  is ethyl;

$\text{R}^2$  and  $\text{R}^3$  are methyl;

$\text{R}^4$  is unsubstituted benzyl;

X is bromo; and

the base is potassium tert-butoxide.

19. (new) A process as claimed in claim 18 wherein the molar ratio of suitable base:

$\text{R}^1\text{O}_2\text{CCH}_2\text{X}$  : compound of formula (II) is 1.2:1.2:1, and wherein the solvent is selected from tetrahydrofuran, diethyl ether, diisopropyl ether, methyl tert-butyl ether, benzene, toluene and xylene, or a mixture of two or more of said solvents.

20. (new) A process as claimed in claim 19 wherein the the temperature is in the range  $-25^{\circ}\text{C}$  to  $-15^{\circ}\text{C}$ .